



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 17 January 2013
A 24/13

Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following the extraordinary Foreign Affairs Council on Mali

Can I just first of all say how pleased I was that Minister Coulibaly was able to join us for today's extraordinary meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council. It gave us an opportunity to hear directly from him about the situation on the ground and it underlined the urgent need for concerted international assistance.

We were united in condemning the aggression of terrorist groups and welcoming the quick response of France and other EU member states. We came together to agree a number of concrete steps. We agreed to establish the EU mission to train and advise the Malian Armed Forces and we appointed French Brigadier General Francois Lecointre as mission commander. The first technical team for this mission will start preparatory work in Mali in the coming few days. We agreed to accelerate our work to support the African-led military mission to Mali, and are offering financial support to it through the African Peace Facility. We are also stepping up our humanitarian assistance. You will probably be aware that we have already mobilised over 93 million euros for the food crisis and political conflict in Mali.

It was very good to hear from Minister Coulibaly that he was committed to adopting a Roadmap he described as having two elements. The first was to "recover the North"; I think that is how he described it. To bring back the north to the country. The second in which we also have great interest is about the Roadmap towards elections. You will know that many colleagues, the Foreign Ministers, have been talking to the Malian government and indeed we have too, about the importance of this Roadmap. We have adopted now the Sahel strategy. All that we do is relevant in the context of that strategy, which is about a number of different things.

It is about humanitarian support in these times of crisis; it's about ensuring development aid; it's about the security of people across the Sahel and in this case all the people of Mali; it's about dealing with this challenge from the terrorists; and it's about building the economy because we know very well how all of this needs to fit together into a comprehensive strategy to enable this part of the world to move forward. We are very committed to continuing that.

P R E S S

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Michael Mann +32 498 999 780 - +32 2 584 9780- Michael.Mann@eeas.europa.eu
Maja Kocijancic +32 498 984 425 - +32 2 298 65 70 - Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu
Sebastien Brabant +32 460 75 09 98 - Sebastien.Brabant@ec.europa.eu

COMM-SPP-HRVP-ASHTON@ec.europa.eu

www.eeas.europa.eu

EN

I have announced today that we will appoint a Special Representative for the Sahel. This will be somebody who can bring together this strategy and actually help work not just with the situation in Mali but with all the countries of the region. The Special representative will look at the potential for these countries to be affected by this situation, but also the challenges that they face.

Thank you
